THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

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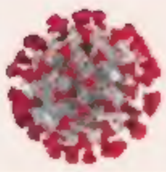
JAB-O-METER
TAKE YOUR SHOT
Jan 17 68,95,050 doses
Jan 18 65,85,945 doses
TOTAL DOSES 1,58,74,38,750

KARNATAKA	JAN 17	JAN 18
Fresh cases	2,58,089	2,38,018
Recoveries	1,51,740	1,57,421
Deaths	385	310

KARNATAKA	JAN 17	JAN 18
Fresh cases	23,433	41,457
Recoveries	7,827	8,353
Deaths	14	20



DATA SHOW OMICRON SPREAD WILL END PANDEMIC: EXPERT

If you were wondering how long will the coronavirus pandemic go on, you won't have to wait much longer, says a UK virologist

'IN 2022, LIFE CAN BE LIKE IT WAS BEFORE COVID'

Year 2022 will mark the end of the pandemic, according to Prof Julian Hiscox, chairman in infection and global health at the University of Liverpool. With Omicron, there will `` be 'natural immunity' on top of vaccination, which will lead to a scenario of endemicity, he said. Endemicity means though the virus spread will continue, its severity will come down to easily manageable levels

TOO EARLY TO CALL IT, SAYS FAUCI

- However, not all experts are as optimistic as Hiscox. Anthony Fauci, chief medical adviser to the US president, says it's too early to say if Omicron will mark the end of the pandemic
- "It is an open question as to whether or not Omicron is going to be the live virus vaccination everyone is hoping for," he said | P9

55 lakh

COVID DEATHS REPORTED WORLDWIDE SO FAR, ACCORDING TO W.H.O. DATA

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ED raids Punjab CM Channi's nephew

Seizes ₹6 crore cash and property documents in connection with 2018 illegal sand mining case

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Chandigarh / New Delhi

THE Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday conducted raids at multiple places in Punjab, including the residence of Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi's nephew Bhupinder Singh alias Honey, in connection with an illegal sand mining case in the poll-bound border state.

The searches covered a dozen locations including Chandigarh, Mohali, Ludhiana and Pathankot. ED sleuths recovered cash worth ₹6 crore, including ₹4 crore from premises linked to Channi's nephew, and some property documents during the searches, sources said, adding that the central agency will take action under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The raids were related to an illegal sand mining case registered by Punjab police in 2018. Later, charges of cheating were added to the FIR and subsequently the ED took over the investigation. The name of one Kudratdeep Singh surfaced during preliminary probe. During detailed interrogation, he revealed that Bhupinder Singh was the main facilitator, sources said. The ED is now probing if the chief minister's name was used to facilitate illegal mining, they added.

Reacting sharply to the raids, the Congress accused the Centre of trying to defame Punjab, adding that such acts will not hurt the ruling party's electoral prospects in the state.

Channi alleged the Centre is using the federal agency to target political opponents. He said actions of central probe agencies have become predictable as they follow the same pattern during every poll season.

After quitting the Congress, former Punjab CM Capt Amarinder Singh had publicly alleged that many Congress leaders were involved in illegal sand mining.

Mann is AAP's CM face

AAP on Tuesday declared its Punjab unit chief Bhagwant Mann as CM candidate, saying 93% of respondents picked him in a poll in which people phoned in or sent messages indicating their choice | P10

'EV hub' K'taka woos Elon Musk

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

JOINING a growing list of states wooing Tesla's billionaire CEO Elon Musk to start a manufacturing unit, Karnataka on Tuesday projected itself as the "Electric Vehicle hub" of the country and an ideal destination to set up such a plant.

"With over 400 R&D centres, 45+ EV startups and an EV cluster near Bengaluru, Karnataka has emerged as EV hub of India. Mr @elonmusk, Karnataka would be an ideal destination to set up @Tesla plant," Karnataka Large and Medium-Scale Industries Minister Murugesh R Nirani tweeted. P4

BLAST ON NAVY SHIP KILLS 3

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mumbai / New Delhi

AN explosion onboard a Navy ship at the Mumbai port killed three personnel and left 11 others injured. The blast happened in an internal compartment of INS Ranvir. "In an unfortunate incident on Monday at Naval Dockyard Mumbai, three naval personnel succumbed to injuries caused by an explosion in an internal compartment onboard INS Ranvir," the Navy said in a statement.

However, there was no major material damage, the statement added. The ship's crew brought the situation under control quickly. INS Ranvir was on cross coast operational deployment from the Eastern Naval Command from November 2021 and was due to return to its base port shortly. A Board of Inquiry has been ordered to investigate the cause. "The explosion was not due to malfunction of any weapon or ammunition. However, it could have happened because of machinery failure. The official probe will determine the exact cause," sources said requesting anonymity. The injured personnel are stable and are admitted in INS Ashwini hospital in Mumbai.

Earlier, too, several untoward incidents involving the Navy have happened off Mumbai coast. In 2014, Navy Chief Admiral D K Joshi had resigned after two officers were killed and seven others were injured when a fire erupted onboard submarine INS Sindhuratna off Mumbai coast.

K'taka reports highest number of cases in country

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

KARNATAKA reported the highest number of Covid cases in the country at 41,457 on Tuesday with a massive jump of 52 per cent over Monday's 27,156 cases. The test positivity rate too went up to 22.30 per cent on Tuesday from 12.45 per cent on Monday. The state also reported 20 deaths.

Bengaluru saw an increase from 15,947 cases on Monday to 25,595 on Tuesday, a whopping 60 per cent jump. It stood as the highest among major cities in the country.

Karnataka was followed by Maharashtra with 39,027 cases, Kerala with 28,481 cases, Delhi 11,684 and West Bengal 10,430 cases.

Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar warned that the state could see daily cases of up to 1.2 lakh at its peak, which is expected on January 25. "As per the Technical Advisory Committee's report, the state may see 80,000 cases during the decline. We are already seeing cases of up to 40,000 per day," he said.

Pointing out that the infection rate in the third wave is way higher than the first two waves, he said the infection may spread five times faster than the first two waves. He said cases may start declining by February second or third week.

GOVT WARNS DOCS OF ACTION

Bengaluru: The Karnataka government on Tuesday warned some medical practitioners of action for allegedly spreading misinformation on Covid. Such misinformation leads to confusion among the public, the govt said. P3

DISTs UNDER HEALTH DEPT EYE

Bengaluru: The state health department is keeping an eye on eight districts where there is an urgent need to prepare hospital infrastructure as the Test Positivity Rate (TPR) in some of them is 30 per cent. P3

2 cops extorting peddlers near CM's house held

MG CHETAN @Bengaluru

TWO policemen, who tried to strike a deal with drug peddlers while on duty at the Chief Minister's residence, were arrested by the RT Nagar police recently. The policemen attached to the Koramangala police station were allegedly demanding money from a drug peddler for not booking him. Head Constable Shivakumar and Police Constable Santhosh are the arrested policemen. The alleged incident took place outside CM Basavaraj Bommai's private residence in RT Nagar, on January 13 evening.

The police said that a resident of the locality alerted the police control room about suspicious activity in an autorickshaw parked near the CM's residence around 6.30 pm. A Hoysala patrolling vehicle rushed to the spot and found two people sitting in the rickshaw and two men in police uniform talking to them.

When the Hoysala staff enquired, the policemen claimed that they received information that the other two were drug peddlers and were questioning them. P5

NICK OF TIME

Mid-air collision averted at B'luru airport

S LALITHA @Bengaluru

A mid-air collision involving two Indigo domestic passenger flights was narrowly averted at the Kempegowda International Aircraft (KIA) recently. What is worse is that the incident was neither recorded in the logbooks nor was it reported by the Airports Authority of India to the country's aviation regulator, both of which are mandatory.

It was the lack of communication among controllers at the Air Traffic Control room that was responsible for the incident that occurred around 8.45 am on January 7.

Directo-General of Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Arun Kumar told TNIE that Flight No. 6E 455 heading from Bengaluru to Kolkata and Flight No. 6E 246 on the way from Bengaluru to Bhubaneswar were involved in ₹breach of separation' at Bengaluru airport. "Put simply, this technical term refers to a situation where sufficient distance was not maintained between two flights either laterally or vertically which is an alarming situation," explained a senior pilot.

Kumar said both the North Runway (for departures) and South Runway (for arrivals) were in use at KIA in the morning of the incident.

CONTINUED ON: P2

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BHAROSA APNO KA
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